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2 Journalists Accuse Contras in '84 Bombing

From a Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—Two American journalists on Thursday accused Nicaraguan rebel leader Adolfo Calero and several of his U.S. backers of ordering the 1984 bombing of a press conference held by rival guerrilla chief Eden Pastora.

Calero and his supporters denied the charge.

In an unusual lawsuit filed in federal court in Miami, free-lance reporters Anthony Avirgan and Martha Honey said they have found three witnesses who attended meetings at which Calero discussed the bombing, in which eight people were killed.

But they refused to produce their witnesses, saying that they fear for their lives.

Seeking \$23.8 Million

Avirgan, who was injured in the bombing, told a press conference here that he and Honey, who is his wife, are seeking \$23.8 million in damages.

He said their investigation of the attack "made it apparent that this was a right-wing plot organized by the FDN"—the Honduran-based Nicaraguan Democratic Force, the main U.S.-backed *contra* organization—"and their supporters in Costa Rica and this country."

Avirgan and Honey charged that several Americans with ties to the CIA and the White House also were involved in the plot, which they alleged was financed by a cocaine-smuggling ring.

Their lawyer, Daniel Sheehan, said that one purpose of the suit—a civil complaint filed under the Racketeer-Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act, a law normally used to prosecute organized crime—was to force contra officials and their backers to testify about their activities under oath.

Denies Involvement

Calero, in Miami, flatly denied any role in the Pastora bombing.

"They better have libel insurance," he said of Avirgan and Honey.

The State Department issued a blanket denial of the 63-page suit's allegations.

"We categorically reject those charges," department spokesman Charles Redman said. "No evidence has been produced to support them." He refused to address any of the suit's specific complaints, dismissing them as "patently ridiculous."

The suit names Calero and 29 others as allegedly engaging in a series of illegal acts, including drug trafficking, gun-running and acts of violence against their adversaries. It charges that some of the defendants also were involved in a plot to assassinate Lewis Tambs, the U.S. ambassador to Costa Rica.